

A

# REVIEW

OF THE

# STATE

OF THE

# BRITISH NATION.

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Tuesday, March 6. 1711.

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**I**N my pursuit of the great Articles of Trade, Credit, and Laws of Trade, I have endeavour'd to make every Thing as plain to the meanest Understanding, as possible; always esteeming Plainness to be the Perfection of Language, and being explicit, the true Design of Providence, in giving Man a Voice, and Words to speak by; he that studies to speak deeply, stultic, and takes a great deal of Pains to do just nothing, and as *Job* says, *Darkens Counsel by Words without Knowledge*,

Yet in spite of plain *A, B, C*, in Trade, while Men's Understandings are not all of a Size, that which informs one Man, will

not inform another; and therefore as they must be dealt with in their own Way, so if you find me telling my Tale twice, or saying the same Thing by differing Methods, this must pass for the Reason of it.

I am in the Matters of Trade, speaking upon two Heads, viz. The Trade to *France*, and the Trade to *Africa*, both useful Branches of our General Commerce, and both, for now almost an Age lost, as I may call it, to the Nation; whether by our wilful, or Ignorant Mistakes, Time may serve for me to tell you plainer.

I have declar'd freely for an open Trade with *France*; I told you before I began, that

that in my Argument, I did no way Enquire whether this clast'd with Treaties, Engagements, or Alliances with Foreign Princes and Confederates, or not, as a Thing not within the Case, nor any part of the present Argument — My Enquiry is only, Whether if it will consist with our Politick Interest, it does consist with our Trading Interest? — And that is the Question I am to pursue — *But yet,* in Obedience to the Impertinence of the Age, and to gratifie some that think I cannot, or I dare not speak Home, as they call it, to such a Question; I shall say a little, to the Politick part of our Prohibition, as it may run counter to any Treaty or Agreement with our Confederates.

I foresee where it will pinch, and where only, viz. Our Treaty with the *Portuguese*, a Confederacy that has indeed been Useful to us in Trade, more than War; and in War, more as we have kept the Enemy from Engaging with them, than for what we have gain'd, or is to be gain'd by them — In the War they have acted like what they are, and in Trade they have acted like what they ever were; to be Cunning and Cowardly, are Properties that often go together; but to be Knaveish and Cowardly, are Properties that never part; Knaves are generally Cowards, but Cowards are always Knaves, for a Coward cannot be an Honest Man — How should he be Honest? He has not Courage, and he that dares not look Danger in the Face, dares not be Honest.

Now, if in our Treaties we have so ty'd our selves to Trade with one Nation, as to prevent our Trading with another, so far we have been blind to our Trading Interest — It would be a most preposterous Way of binding our selves, and therefore let the Enquirer satistie and inform himself in the Matter — The Ministry of *England*, call them what you please, whom her Majesty has Employ'd, you will hardly call them FOOLS; they could not be such Fools, to Engage to *Portugal* that they would not Trade with *France* — I own, I have not seen the Treaty at large, but I venture so

much upon the Senses of the former Ministry, If they had Eyes in their Heads it could not be.

They might engage, that they would not suffer the Imposts and high Duties upon such *French Goods* as Interfer'd with the Produce of *Portugal*, to be taken off for such and such a Time, and what's this to the purpose? There has not been a Word said yet, nor ever will by me, to take off one Penny of the high Duties upon Wine and Brandy from *France*; it is a Case by itself, on the Merits of which, the true difference of the Trade now, from what it was formerly, lies, and I shall Treat of it by itself; But what is this Treaty now, to a general Prohibition of Trade with *France*? Truly nothing at all.

And therefore I take upon me to say, That the Prohibition of Trade with *France* may be taken off, and that Trade be laid open again, without any Breach of our Alliances with *Portugal*.

I next come to Answer a most valliant Objector, who thinks he has made a Home thrust at me, and crows upon the Advantage, crying Victory, before he has put his Armour off; his Question is put into a Letter by the Penny-Post, thus.

S I R,

YOU are very positive, in your Notions upon the Trade to *France*, and take upon you to Reflect upon the general Understanding of the Nation, in their Prohibitions of that Trade: Pray, How comes it to pass that you who are so great an Admirer, I might say an Adorer, of King William, should thus forget your self, and fly in his Face, in whose Days, and by whose Counsels, and with whose Consent, the first Prohibitions of the French Trade were set on Foot — This omission, makes all you say of no Value, and proves your Understanding as shallow as your Memory is short — Your Answer to this, if you think it possible, is desir'd, and pray Answer it directly, and without your Flourishes and fine Words.

Your Humble Servant

A. B. C.  
Now



Now good Mr. A. B. C. I shall send you back to learn your A. B. C. in this Matter, I believe I make as few Flourishes, and Trade as little in fine Words, as any of my Neighbours; but if ever I used them in my Life, or shall ever have occasion for them, I have not the least want of them here, and therefore adjourning the Dispute to my next Review upon Trade, I shall only let this Gentleman know before Hand, in what particular manner his Question shall be answer'd.

1. I shall prove, That it was absolutely necessary to Prohibit the *French Trade* in King *William's* Time, and that it is for the same Reason, as absolutely necessary to take off that Prohibition now.
2. I shall prove, That Prohibition of the *French Trade*, however fatal to us now, was not so, but Profitable to us then.
3. I shall prove, That the Advantages we may make, by taking off a Prohibition NOW, are all Founded upon the Advantages we did make, of laying on a Prohibition then, and that the same Reason that made a Prohibition then the wisest Thing, makes it now the maddest Thing the Nation could do, or ever did in the Matters of Trade.

And when all this is prov'd, I presume our A. B. C. will be answer'd.

But I leave him for a while, and turn to the other of our National Blindnesses which I mention'd at first, and this is neglecting, exposing, and indeed throwing away another considerable Branch of our Trade, I mean that to *Africa*.

So much has been said to prove the Usefulness, the Advantage, and the Necessity of that Trade, that it would be a vain Repetition to say any more — Whatever can be said for a Trade, that is the Essence of our Colonies — The Support of our Sugar and Tobacco Works, that brings much Home, and carries little out; that Exports

nothing but what we can spare, and brings Home nothing but what we cannot be without — That sets our Poor to Work, for Manufactures, Employs our Shipping, and extends our Dominions; That carries out our Woollen to *Africa*, carries Slaves to *America*; That barter Gold for Glass-Beads, and the Riches of *Africa*, for the Baubles of *Europe*, may be said for this Trade.

And yet for how weak a Contest, for how Senseless a Dispute, are we giving away this Trade? — And that, as we may say, to any Body that will take it — And what is the Weight of this Dispute? Only whether these People or those People, shall be the Traders; a Dispute so foolish in the Reason of it, so fatal in the End of it, and so easie to be decided, that if an Infatuation from Heaven did not seem just now upon this Nation, as well in other Cases, as in this, one would not think such a Nation as this, could be so led on blindfold, to their own Losses and Disadvantages.

Three Years has this Nation now Languish'd under this Trade-Lunacy, and been deciding this mock Question, Whether the Trade shall be carried on by an Exclusive Company, or no? — Would the Publick bear with me for saying it, had they thought fit, I had almost said, KNOWN HOW, to state the Question right, it should have been thus.

Whether shall the Trade from *England* to *Africa*, from thence to *England* with Gold, &c. and to our Colonies with *Negroes* be carried on, by us, or by the *Dutch*?

If it were resolv'd, as perhaps after some Debate it might have been, that it should be carried on by us, then whether shall we commit it to those that can carry it on, or to those that cannot?

I would not reflect upon Bodies and Assemblies, and National Consults of Men — But this I'll be bold to say, that of all the Publick Debates that ever I saw, I never

ver was Witness to such unpolite Reasonings in Trade among Men in other Things completely Polite, as I was in this Case— Where I saw, Whether in a House or out, whether together or a-part, I do not tell you; How did Notion drown Men's Reason, Interest shut their Eyes, positive Affection pass for Argument, Slander for Testimony, and Shadow for Demonstration.

But what has been the Consequence? Had we been tossing a Ball, that if it was lost was of no Value? Had we been enter'd into a Wood; that we could find our Way out of, it had been no Harm; but all this fiddling and fooling, has been with the Nation's Vitals— The Trade has been in a Fit, and we have been dancing round her, instead of fetching Cordials to her.

At last we run to the Doctor for help, and bring her, to Parliament—And was it any better here?—Truly too much the same Thing, one tells one Story, and one another call one another Names, Retriminate and Rail, and the House could never come at the bottom of the Matter—If the Nurses and Attendants to a sick Person give a wrong Account of the Disease, no Physician can prescribe proper Medicines; if you give a wrong State of your Case, no Wonder if a Counsel gives wrong Advice.

The Company told their Tale one Way, the Separate Traders another; the Government was for settling the Trade one Way, the Com— of Trade another— Till the House grew perfectly tired with the Fatigue of it.

When at last, they found themselves inclin'd to give the Trade to the 10 per Cent. Men, and Sanction'd them in to give the House a Scheme of what Way they propos'd to carry on the Trade, and how it should be secur'd; then truly they found their Error, that they had espoused the Men, and not the Trade; That they were meer Projectioners, their Schemes made up of nothing but *may be's*, and *it's probable*, and *this will be the Consequence*, and *it cannot be doubted*, mighty *Suppositions*, and infallible *Possibilities*,—But not one Word of real Securities for carrying on the Trade, and so the House was fain to drop the Cause, because they were afraid of the People.

I cannot suppose so Uncharitably of the Separate Traders, that they will make any new Pretensions, and therefore I hope the Trade will now be settled upon those that CAN SECURE IT, without any Disturbance from those that CANNOT.